

# BAPT Child Protection & Safeguarding Guidelines



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# Introduction

BAPT is committed to supporting members to safeguard and protect children from harm. Staff, members and volunteers in this organisation accept and recognise our responsibilities to develop awareness of issues which cause children and young people harm.

## Child Protection Definition

Child Protection/ Safeguarding refers to the actions we take to promote the welfare of children and vulnerable adults to protect them from harm, abuse and neglect. We recognise that harm can come from any source, including from within any organisation working with children and vulnerable adults. In our sector, we understand it to mean protecting people, including children and at risk adults, from harm that arises from coming into contact with our staff or services. Safeguarding establishes a culture where everyone takes responsibility for welfare of children and vulnerable adults.

**See Appendix 1** for definitions of risk categories for children and adults.

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Play therapists involved in offering direct support to children and their legal guardians / parents or carers, may have contact with children at risk of harm in the course of their duties.

Administrative workers, volunteers, trainees or qualified play therapists may also become aware of situations where a child may be at risk of being harmed, or is being harmed.

It is important that all paid or unpaid workers are alert to signs of either physical harm, neglect or emotional abuse and take appropriate action to safeguard children who may be at risk of exposure to harm. For ease of reference, the term 'worker' within this document refers to both paid and unpaid staff.

The following outlines in detail what steps must be taken to safeguard children at risk where any form of abuse may be suspected. It outlines our commitment and obligation to equip play therapists / workers with the skills & knowledge to be able to deliver child safeguarding policy safely.

**Key Principles** - All workers must:

- Be alert to and act on indications that a child may be being harmed or be at risk of harm.
- Be clear about their responsibilities in safeguarding the protection of children at risk.
- Act in accordance with agency Child Protection Policy procedures and guidance on children in need of support and protection.

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**Action to take if a BAPT member suspects that a child may be at immediate risk:**

- Members should ALWAYS and IMMEDIATELY discuss any suspicions or concerns with the named Child Protection Officer [CPO] within the service they are operating and their clinical supervisor if available.
- If working independently then the first point of contact would be the Regional Social Work Department or if immediate concern of risk, contact the Police.
- Members must be ready to provide the CPO with detailed facts to enable them to share essential information with relevant authorities
- In exceptional circumstances when the CPO cannot be contacted and a child is in danger, a concerned Worker should bring the matter to the attention of their Local Social Work Safeguarding Services or the Police.
- Keep detailed records of contacts and inform the CPO as soon as possible.
- Regional Social Work Department and / or Police are the statutory services, will follow-up and may further investigate any child safety concerns.

**Contact details to have before starting work with a child**

Emergency Contact Phone Numbers

Local day-time Social Work number: .....

Local after-hours Social Work number: .....

Local day-time Police Service number: .....

Local after-hours Police Service number: .....

Any other information:

## Four Nation child protection/safeguarding legislation and guidance

### England

In England, the Department for Education (DfE) provides the key statutory guidance for anyone working with children and young people: Working together to safeguard children

#### Latest guidelines for children in Education 2025

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/68add931969253904d155860/Keeping\\_children\\_safe\\_in\\_education\\_from\\_1\\_September\\_2025.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/68add931969253904d155860/Keeping_children_safe_in_education_from_1_September_2025.pdf)

#### An overview of current changes in child legislation in England 2024

<https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/SN06787/SN06787.pdf>

#### Working together to safeguard children 2023

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65797f1e0467eb000d55f689/Working\\_together\\_to\\_safeguard\\_children\\_2023\\_-\\_statutory\\_framework.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65797f1e0467eb000d55f689/Working_together_to_safeguard_children_2023_-_statutory_framework.pdf)

This sets out how organisations should work together to keep children safe.

If your organisation is a registered charity, you must also follow the Charity Commission's guidance.

### Northern Ireland

In Northern Ireland, the Department of Health (DOH) has published Co-operating to safeguard children and young people in Northern Ireland (DOH, 2017).

The Revised regional core child protection policies and procedures for Northern Ireland explain what actions people who work with children should take if they have concerns about a child or young person's welfare (Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland, 2019).

#### NI Updated information for education safeguarding procedures 2020

<https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/education/Safeguarding%20and%20Child%20Protection%20in%20Schools%20guide%20pdf%20for%20website%20%28August%2020%29.PDF>

#### NI Safeguarding procedures 2025

<https://www.proceduresonline.com/sbni/>

If your organisation is a registered charity, you must also follow the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland's guidance.

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## Scotland

In Scotland, the National guidance for child protection provides a framework for anyone who might face child protection issues (Scottish Government, 2023). This includes third sector organisations (voluntary and community organisations, charities, social enterprises, co-operatives and mutuals).

[National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland 2021 - updated 2023 - gov.scot](#)

[Child protection learning and development 2024: national framework - gov.scot](#)

If your organisation is a registered charity, you must also follow guidance from the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator.

## Wales

The Welsh Government has published Working together to safeguard people, a suite of guidance and codes of practice that sets out how agencies and practitioners should work together to safeguard children (Welsh Government, 2019).

Volume 5 (PDF) focuses on handling individual cases to protect children at risk.

The Wales Safeguarding Procedures provide a framework for how child protection referrals, actions and plans should be carried out.

### Welsh updated framework

<https://www.safeguarding.wales/en/>

If your organisation is a registered charity, you must also follow the Charity Commission's guidance.

For regional advice on child protection policy, contact your local authority social care department or the NSPCC 24-hour Child Protection helpline on 0808 800 5000. If you're a child or young person and need help or advice, you can call Childline on 0800 1111. Their service is private and confidential.

## Professional body registration

All therapists should be registered with the relevant professional body and follow their codes of safeguarding/child protection practice.

Play Therapists: Ethical Basis for Good Practice

- <https://www.bapt.info/play-therapy/ethical-basis-good-practice-play-therapy/>

Art, Speech and Language Therapists: Standards of Proficiency

- <https://www.hcpc-uk.org/standards/standards-of-proficiency/>

BACP - British Association for counselling and psychotherapy

- <https://www.bacp.co.uk/events-and-resources/ethics-and-standards/ethical-framework-for-the-counselling-professions/>

PTUK - Play Therapy UK

<https://playtherapy.org.uk/ptuk-ethical-framework-and-guidelines/>



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## Appendix 1 - Définitions

### Definition of a child:

The policy and procedures apply to all children and young people up to the age of 16 years, including unborn babies. Within the document the terms “children” or “child” refer to all children and young people up to the age of 16 years.

The fact that a child has become sixteen years of age, is living independently or is in further education, is in the armed forces, in hospital, or in prison or a young offender’s institution, does not change their status or their entitlement to services or their protection under the Children Act 1989.

### Definitions of Adult at Risk:

When a young person reaches the age of 16 the responsibility for their well-being may transfer to adult service providers. Although they cease to be subject of the Safeguarding Children Procedures, some adults may continue to be vulnerable.

An “Adult at Risk” is defined as any person aged 16 years and over who:

- are unable to safeguard their own well-being, property, rights or other interests; and
- are at risk of harm; and
- because they are affected by disability, mental disorder, illness or physical or mental infirmity, are more vulnerable to being harmed than adults who are not so affected.

### Definitions of abuse:

Abuse and neglect are forms of maltreatment. Abuse or neglect may involve inflicting harm or failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be maltreated at home; within a family or peer network; in care placements; institutions or community settings; and in the online and digital environment. Those responsible may be previously unknown or familiar, or in positions of trust. They may be family members. Children may be harmed pre-birth, for instance by domestic abuse of a mother or through parental alcohol and drug use.

### **Physical abuse:**

Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child or adult at risk. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child or adult at risk.

There may be some variation in family, community or cultural attitudes to parenting, for example, in relation to reasonable discipline. Cultural sensitivity must not deflect practitioners from a focus on a child's essential needs for care and protection from harm, or a focus on the need of a family for support to reduce stress and associated risk

### **Emotional / Psychological Abuse:**

Emotional or psychological abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of another person such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the person's emotional development. It may involve conveying to another person that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may include not giving another person opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond the child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the abuse of another.

It may involve serious bullying (including cyber-bullying) causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children.

Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child or adult at risk, though it may occur alone.

### **Neglect:**

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to:

- Provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment);
- Protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger;
- Ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care-givers);

- Ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.
- Be responsive to a child's basic emotional needs.

### **Sexual Abuse:**

**Child sexual abuse (CSA)** is an act that involves a child under 16 years of age in any activity for the sexual gratification of another person, whether or not it is claimed that the child either consented or assented. Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse as can other children.

For those who may be victims of sexual offences aged 16-17, child protection procedures should be considered. These procedures must be applied when there is concern about the sexual exploitation or trafficking of a child.

The CSA may involve:

- physical contact, including penetrative or non-penetrative acts.
- non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at or in the production of indecent images
- in watching sexual activities, using sexual language towards a child, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

**Child sexual exploitation (CSE)** is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a person under 18 into sexual activity in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact. It can also occur through the use of technology. Children who are trafficked across borders or within the UK may be at particular risk of sexual abuse.

### **Criminal exploitation:**

Criminal exploitation refers to the action of an individual or group using an imbalance of power to coerce, control, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into any criminal activity in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, or for the financial or other advantage of the perpetrator or facilitator. Violence or the threat of violence may feature.

The victim may have been criminally exploited, even if the activity appears consensual. Child criminal exploitation may involve physical contact and may also occur through the use of technology.

It may involve gangs and organised criminal networks. Sale of illegal drugs may be a feature. Children and vulnerable adults may be exploited to move and store drugs and money. Coercion, intimidation, violence (including sexual violence) and weapons may be involved.

### **Child trafficking:**

Child trafficking involves the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt, exchange or transfer of control of a child under the age of 18 years for the purposes of exploitation. Transfer or movement can be within an area and does not have to be across borders. Examples of and reasons for trafficking can include sexual, criminal and financial exploitation, forced labour, removal of organs, illegal adoption, and forced or illegal marriage.

### **Female genital mutilation:**

This extreme form of physical, sexual and emotional assault upon girls and women involves partial or total removal of the external female genitalia, or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons. Such procedures are usually conducted on children and are a criminal offence in Scotland. FGM can be fatal and is associated with long-term physical and emotional harm.

### **Forced marriage:**

A forced marriage is a marriage conducted without the full and free consent of both parties and where duress is a factor. Duress can include physical, psychological, financial, sexual, and emotional abuse. Forced marriage is both a child protection and adult protection matter. Child protection processes will be considered up to the age of 18. Forced marriage may be a risk alongside other forms of so called 'honour-based' abuse (HBA). HBA includes practices used to control behaviour within families, communities, or other social groups, to protect perceived cultural and religious beliefs and/or 'honour'.